

The logo for PIXL, featuring the word 'PIXL' in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font. The letter 'i' is lowercase and has a white dot above it. The background is orange with various geometric patterns including circles, a grid of dots, and concentric circles.

IGNITING LEADERS
CHANGING LIVES

LEADERSHIP THINKING GUIDE

WAYS TO USE THE PIXL SPECIALIST AND
NETWORKING PLATFORM

JUNE 2025

WE WALK WITH YOU, BUT YOU ARE IN CONTROL

In September 2024, we radically changed the PiXL support model to serve you better, be more responsive and help deepen and broaden the things on offer. Your PiXL membership enables you to do the following on our Specialist and Networking Platform, all part of your membership fee:

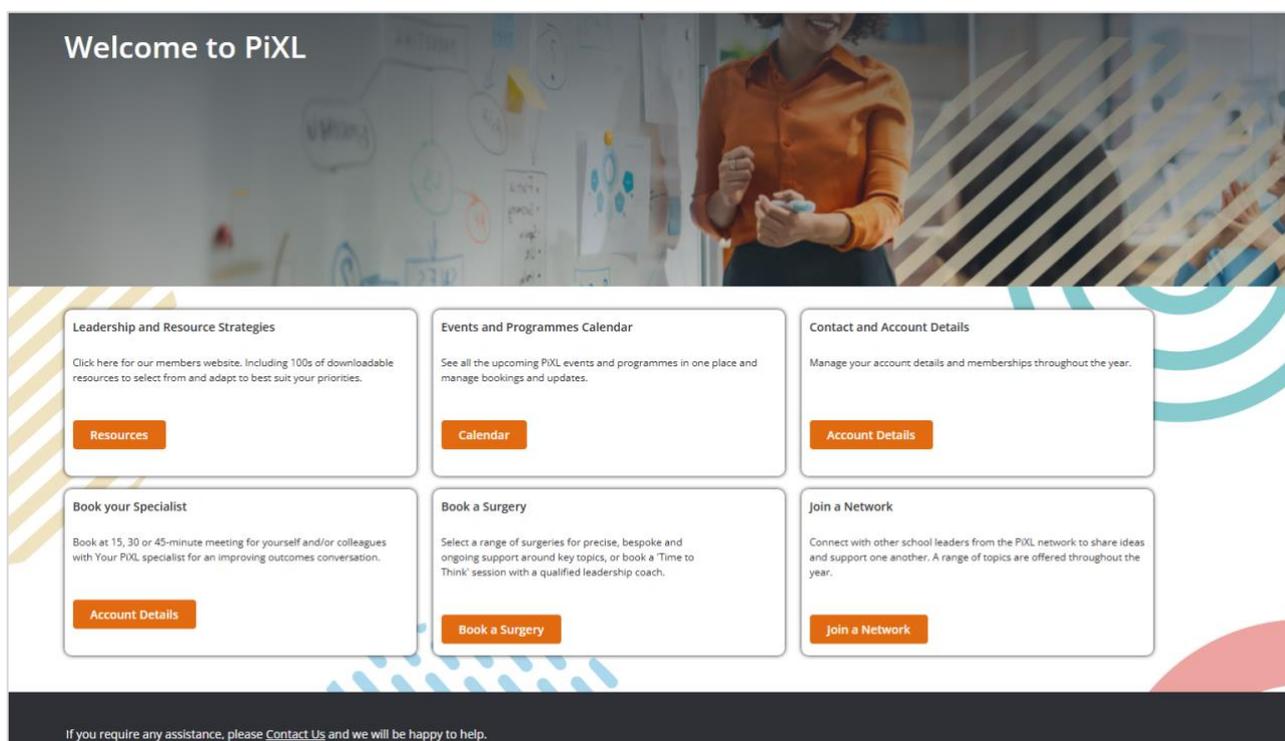
- Book 2 people on to every National Conference
- Have unlimited* access to your Improving Outcomes Specialist and a range of surgeries led by experts in their field
- Access the 6 online School of PiXL Leadership Courses for free (Engagement Leadership x 2, RSL, Making Change Leader, New Middle Leader, Established Middle Leader)
- Book open days in person
- Attend as many online networks as you want
- Access all resources and strategies on our website

**subject to availability, we always keep capacity but do book in advance to avoid disappointment.*

The platform, and the people on it, are here to serve you and walk alongside you. We will discuss and help you with whatever you bring if we cover it. And if we don't, we will try our best to hook you up with someone who does. As we give you the ability to elevate a number of your staff to have full booking powers on the platform, additionally to your access, it may help to think through who may benefit and how you plan to use it to equip your leaders and to improve outcomes and life chances to achieve your WIG or to address your school priorities.

A reminder of what is on the platform from the middle of July 2025 following some upgrades of the system:

- Book your Improving Outcomes Specialist – they are your designated person all year
- Book a surgery – a range of experts and topics here to choose from
- Join a network – several running each term
- Book all events and see all programmes – including the School of PiXL Leadership
- Access the members' website for all the resources and strategies
- Keep your contact management up to date so you don't miss out on weekly communications and updates from PiXL
- Allow up to 6 staff full booking rights so they have autonomy to book their own meetings as well as give general access to resources to all staff



Here are some questions to ask yourself (and your teams) about what you want to achieve through using the PiXL Specialist and Networking Platform. These questions may help you think through the vision of what you want it to be and what it could be.

1. Do I want to keep this as a tool for me as the RSL/Head or spread this wider across the team?
2. Do we want to plan in meetings to match our internal calendars?
3. In the Specialist meetings, the RSL would usually be the consistent person but who else might you want to bring to those meetings, when relevant?
4. What are we going to tell people about what we want them to do with it and how it might benefit them/us?
5. If we are going to elevate a few people to be able to book anything they want, how are we going to choose those people and explain this/launch this with them?
6. Do we want to let people explore and book or do we want to set up debrief meetings to explore action points they have made because of some meetings?
7. Would making time to think about a problem with someone help me get clarity? Would diarising this by booking a meeting enable this to happen and to protect my time?
8. Who else could we identify who would benefit from some time to think about their own leadership?
9. Do we want to book in meetings each month or each half-term or book when the need arises? There is now availability until the end of Autumn 2025, enabling you to book ahead and strategise how you utilise these meetings.

DIFFERENT MODELS WE ARE SEEING BEING USED (SO FAR!)

BREADTH AND DEPTH

This approach sees leaders stretch the net wide across different teams by inviting anyone to request a meeting of any kind or encouraging teams or individuals to immerse themselves in certain areas. It may be that the RSL is meeting with their specialist regularly but also then signing up others to further opportunities.

RSL INTENSE IMPACT

This is when the RSL/Head wants impact through focused and detailed meetings. Most typically, RSLs book these with their specialists to focus on the Wildly Important Goal (WIG) and the barriers that are in their way. In these sessions most RSLs want to experience both encouragement and challenge and to think about their barriers in a different way. These sessions are practical and solution focused around the needs the RSL brings.

MIDDLE LEADER SUPPORT

We are seeing this model used a lot: the RSL meets with their specialist but then, as a result of that meeting, books Middle Leaders on to a range of surgeries or networks or invites them to attend the specialist meeting with them to focus on the WIG. Sometimes they book 8 Middle Leaders onto a surgery on some of the key PiXL strategies (like Walking Talking Mocks or Horsforth Quadrant) and then follow up with actions that may have arisen from the meeting.

LEADERSHIP TIME TO THINK

These are the most popular surgeries currently run by Rachel Johnson or Joe Sparks. Although they are sometimes used for discussing a big issue in school, most often people come to talk about their own leadership and barriers that may be stopping them from creating the change they want or from leading the way they want to. Whether this is a struggle with confidence, their identity (if they are new to leadership), team dynamics, workload, finding new perspective, working through their thoughts about whatever is happening, boundaries or people pleasing, these coaching-style conversations are safe spaces where people can explore their own thoughts and give themselves the time and space to think. We typically see people book every few weeks or months.

NETWORKS PLUS

This model involves a number of staff attending the networking online events where schools share what they are doing around a topical issue that is coming up in other PiXL meetings as a common need. Following these networks, staff meet to discuss what they picked up from it and what they might explore. There are some leaders who have booked on to every network and then follow up in specialist meetings or surgeries.

OPEN DAYS AND EVENTS

There are some leaders who enjoy the face-to-face element of the offer and so maximise on this, through open days and events, sending 2 people to each across the year and then having follow-up meetings to share what has been learned. The RSL comes to every conference but rotates the other person who attends with them. We are also finding that a growing number of RSLs are also coming to the subject conferences alongside their subject lead to hear the updates first hand (additional to membership with a PiXL-enabled fee).

You may have a model that you are working with or can just take a bit of each. The crucial thing about the PiXL Specialist and Networking Platform is that you get from it what you want and need, whatever that may be.

FREEDOM WITH DIRECTION

If you know you want all departments/year teams to book something on the platform by a certain time, you could set this direction ahead of time to match your development plan. It may be that you ask everyone to book a surgery on something like 'Reading' ahead of a training day or another whole-staff input. You can use the platform as an additional support after your own Core Team meetings so that you know each person is continuing the discussion between meetings with a PiXL Specialist.

Below is a selection of the innovative and creative ways schools have utilised appointments and surgeries over the year. Do read through ones from other sectors as well as your own – many are applicable across all sectors or can easily be adapted. You may want to look at these as a senior team and consider how you will make best use of this facility next year in order to support you and your staff.

A SELECTION OF HOW LEADERS IN OUR NETWORK HAVE USED THE SPECIALIST APPOINTMENTS AND SURGERIES

PRIMARY

1. A number of schools book Improving Outcomes meetings with different year groups. One RSL met with their specialist at the beginning of the week to outline priorities across the school. The specialist then met with every year team through the week and finally met again with the HT and RSL at the end of the week to consider next steps. The process has added capacity to the Senior Leadership Team and ensured that the use of PiXL has been broadened across the school.
2. One RSL has booked specialist meetings and surgeries for their two ECTs. The ECTs have reported that knowing that the option is there to speak to one of the team at PiXL has given them increased confidence.
3. One school has decided to engage across the breadth of the offer and has booked the following this year: all conferences, the Primary Curriculum Leaders course, 2 Primary Live workshops, 7 surgeries, 5 Improving Outcomes meetings, 2 Networks.
4. Schools across a Trust who joined PiXL last July have all put together a PiXL implementation plan to ensure they make the best use of the offer. This included thinking carefully about how they will use Improving Outcomes meetings and surgeries, which staff would benefit from them and how these would be followed up on.
5. One RSL attended the Transition Primary Live session and was inspired by one of the schools who contributed to this. She booked a Transition surgery along with the SLT as part of a planning session for a 3-day whole-school event at the start of September to increase belonging. As a result of the surgery, they are using the *Who Makes a Forest? Go Green* materials and are adapting them for their event. They are also using the Horsforth Quadrant to inform transition discussions and the Securing the Fundamentals Character and Wellbeing resources to help identify barriers.
6. One school has booked a number of Writing surgeries for year teams across the year. As a result, they have reported that by the beginning of April, they are already at the highest percentage of pupils at age-related expectations in 3 years. The RSL has also carried out pupil voice on writing. There has been a significant improvement in pupils' attitudes with many of them speaking with pure joy about the stories they have been writing.

7. One school has booked a series of Handwriting surgeries in order to put together an action plan to support staff understanding of progression in Handwriting.
8. One school has booked a total of 15 Improving Outcomes meetings this year (plus 5 surgeries, 3 networks, 2 Primary Live sessions, 3 School of PiXL Leadership courses). The Improving Outcomes meetings have varied from meetings with HT and RSL to consider KS2 data, meetings with each year team, and meetings to discuss transition for Year 2 to Year 3.
9. One school has booked a series of Oracy surgeries to supporting in auditing Oracy in the school and putting together a plan to promote Oracy and to also set up a Debating club.
10. Assessment surgeries have been booked by one school for different year teams to better understand how to make the most of the Diagnostic Assessment tools to inform planning and identify and address gaps.

SECONDARY/POST 16

1. One school has booked onto 23 surgeries and 17 networks. Over 27 members of staff have been involved in meetings with our specialist team.
2. One school has booked a specialist to plan out with middle leaders how to effectively run Walking Talking Mocks for different groups of students and how classroom Walking Talking Marks can be a powerful strategy in the lead up to exams.
3. One school booked separate meetings for their EN and MA leads and then a meeting together, to look at strategies to support EM match-up at grade 4, grade 5 and grade 7+.
4. One school is booking Improving Outcomes conversations with their dedicated specialist every month. The meetings use PiXL's leadership approach to discuss the WIG, barriers, strategies and share their success/impact. The RSL invites members of the core team and HT to join some of the meetings.
5. One school has made good use of our curriculum specialists. Leads for EN, MA and SC have each met with our subject experts, discussing topics like DTTR, match-up, increasing grade 7+, support for low literacy levels and improving outcomes with Y11. The EN lead has now looked at booking an EN specialist to join a department meeting.
6. One school was reviewing their assessment policy and arranged for our assessment lead to meet with the senior team and to prompt questions and engage their thinking around the school's purpose of assessment. Follow-up meetings with the lead for assessment focused on particular aspects of the assessment system – what they capture, what they do with it and how they report.
7. One school has sent someone to all networks, getting 100s of ideas. When possible, they join in pairs and agree a time after the network to meet, deciding which strategies will work in their context. They have taken some of the strategies and arranged a follow-up meeting with a specialist to discuss further.

8. One school was looking to revisit their whole-school reading strategy. A team of leaders met with our Reading lead to get an understanding of how PiXL's reading strategy can support and thereafter, each member of the team had 1:1 time with a specialist to focus in on their area.
9. One RSL books in a meeting with their specialist following each national conference so they can work through their takeaways and what might add value to their raising standards plan. They then facilitate meetings for other leaders with specialists to go deeper and focus in on a strategy.
10. The Head or the RSL books a Leadership Time to Think session to explore an issue each time. So far, they have covered: passivity in students, subtraction in leadership and crucial conversations.
11. Following the School of PiXL Leadership courses, a number of people have booked a Leadership Time to Think session to explore what they learned in the course.
12. One Senior Team agreed to listen to a Pearl podcast together and then book a session with Rachel to probe them on their thinking.
13. Several teams have come to a Leadership Time to Think session to explore how they are reacting to external visitors or 'intervention', be that an advisor, the DfE or OFSTED, and how they might approach future visits.
14. Booking meetings for small groups of staff across a range of different surgeries on the same day and then sharing what they had learned (this has been done as part of a training day).
15. Several people in one team have booked Joe Sparks on a Leadership Time to Think session with the only instruction being 'challenge us' or 'inspire us'!
16. There are several RSLs who are using Leadership Time to Think as a way of referring colleagues they line manage, often Middle Leaders but sometimes others too. In these subsequent sessions one on one, the ML has been able to talk about their confidence issues or their work-life balance or how to handle criticism. The issue is addressed but not with the line manager which sometimes enables people to be more open and honest.
17. Several colleagues have booked as a pair of SLT to discuss how to plan meetings or training days and talk through the approach they want to take.

However you use the benefits of your membership, our hope is that it will help you feel equipped, to equip others, to find support quickly and easily and to support you to change the areas of your leadership or school that you want to change. We are here to serve you.



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